

Ep #149: Transform Tricky Habits with This Unconventional Approach



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With Your Host

Kristi Angevine

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Welcome to Episode 149. I'm your host, Kristi Angevine. This podcast is your guide to being intentional with your habits by learning why you think, feel, and act as you do.

In a recent episode, I discussed five steps to help you cultivate self-trust, through different positive qualities that I reviewed in another previous episode. These positive qualities help with any habits, any challenges, and work in pretty much any area of your life.

And this week, we'll explore the idea of layering, or stacking, these positive qualities for a synergistic effect. Let's dive in, shall we?

Welcome to *Habits On Purpose*, a podcast for high-achieving women who want to create lifelong habits that give more than they take. You'll get practical strategies for mindset shifts that will help you finally understand the root causes of why you think, feel, and act as you do. And now here's your host, Physician and Master Certified Life Coach Kristi Angevine.

Hello, hello. It is December and the holiday season is well upon us here in the U.S. And with the holiday season can come a lot of stuff. There's stuff with family. There's stuff with travel. There's stuff with all sorts of potentially unexamined ways of looking at the world, looking at yourself, that can come up in a concentrated fashion.

So I just want to name that, if that's something that you're dealing with right now amidst schedule changes, gift giving, travel, family dynamics with your nuclear family, with your extended family. Or if you're single and you do not have a large family, and you are grappling with other things that come with the holiday season, I just want to name that.

This is kind of where we are right now. And one of the things I find really important to do for my life is to just be really real with what is here. It helps me meet myself where I am. It helps me acknowledge what's actually going on. And that opens the door to having a sort of a compassionate sense of validating what's going on, and being really matter of fact about, "Okay, if I'm having some challenges, this might be why."

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It's a way of being really open to what's actually present in the current season of your life. And one of the ideas that I've been exploring is, what could be possible when we deliberately combine different positive qualities? What happens when you combine patience with playfulness? Or courage with curiosity?

In Episode 147, I went over a bunch of positive qualities, and each of them by themselves are powerful in so many ways. But when we combine them, there can be something new created. Just like we can combine ingredients in baking or in cooking and we can get a delicious meal.

Combining different positive qualities can give a synergistic effect that is really helpful for habit change. This synergistic effect works like an antidote or an elixir when it comes to your habits. And I have found that there are particular combinations of positive qualities that are really powerful to tackle particular habits.

So if you're like me or my clients ... And hello to those of you who I talk to on a regular basis ... you may have special expertise in habits like second-guessing, sharp personal criticism, comparison, catastrophic thinking, rumination, worrying, people-pleasing, all-or-none thinking, suppressing emotions, compartmentalizing things, etc. etc.

These habits, as you will hear me often say, they all developed for a good reason. We don't repeat things that have zero benefit. Even things that have an underbelly of consequences that negatively affect our lives or our happiness, when you look carefully, all of these things, they have some reward, some benefit, or they serve a purpose to either protect or help us cope.

Now, once old strategies, old ways of coping stop working or begin to take more than they give, that's when we want change. That's when we need change. But how?

Willpower and some habit hacks from pop psychology usually end up without moving the needle in a meaningful way. And they leave us feeling like, what the heck am I to do? To make any real change calls on less

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conventional approaches. And while there's no one right way, there's no cookie-cutter protocol for habit change, in general, real change requires a few things.

Number one: Real change requires really understanding how a certain pattern makes sense for you. Sometimes this is really straightforward. And other times it's more like a deep-sea expedition where you are exploring things and you have no idea what you're going to find.

And you might not think that changing something like people pleasing or all-or-none thinking, or a tendency to underestimate how long things are going to take, would call on deep personal healing, but often, it does.

Number two: Real change also requires awareness of what we usually overlook: our thoughts, our emotions, our default responses. And awareness of the conscious and subconscious beliefs that drive these thoughts, emotions, and default responses.

Now, this awareness piece is one that can sound very simple. "I can just increase my awareness, then I will understand things better." But awareness, as simple as it is, it's not necessarily intuitive. So this will be something that we talk about more and more on the podcast.

Now, number three: Change also requires a willingness to experiment with different ways to create the change that you want. And this part you can do concurrently with the learning and the healing of "the why" that drives your habits, as well as concurrent with cultivating that awareness I mentioned.

Today is about this third aspect. And today is your invitation to experiment with stacking different positive qualities to strategically address certain habits. Now, tricky habits are multidimensional. There's no one simple way to change them. And often you have to try a variety of different things. So this is just another tool for your toolbox.

So let's talk about stacking or layering positive qualities. Episode 147 goes over 14 qualities that can be really beneficial to intentionally bring into your life. These qualities are: calm, clarity, curiosity, playfulness, compassion,

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patience, confidence, presence, courage, creativity, belonging, connectedness, perspective, and persistence.

If you haven't listened to Episode 147, go back and listen to that because I flesh out what these qualities actually mean and what they can look like. This will help you understand when you are feeling these things or when you are embodying these things, because sometimes they're very, very easy to miss. And sometimes we don't know how to get more of them and cultivate them because we just don't know what we're looking for.

Now, when I have these types of qualities present, I feel like my best, most authentic self. As I've mentioned before, these qualities, for me, open the door to intuition. They help me have an interest and a willingness to do hard things and to go for bold goals. They kind of act like cofactors for things like wisdom, joy, awe, and love.

So let's get deeper into the magic of combining or layering these positive qualities. I'm going to talk about a few different habits and a particular combination of qualities that I find works really well to address that habit. As you listen, listen to see if I mentioned any of your particular pain points. And listen to see if this combination of qualities might help you.

Let's start with overwhelm and panic related to a massive to-do list. This is very timely in the holiday season when you might have a bunch of events going on, lots of travel, squishing work into little pockets here and there, having people over to your house, visiting other people, or just navigating a variety of different things that have sort of landed on your plate or that you've brought into your world on purpose.

When it comes to overwhelm and panic with a massive to-do list, the best combination of qualities I have found is patience plus perspective. Perspective is being able to step back and see the big picture and identify what's essential and what's actually just masquerading as necessary. Patience is the reminder that it's okay to slow down. In fact, when you deliberately stop rushing, you can focus and make more progress than when you're in a frantic caffeinated ball of panic.

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Reducing overwhelm can look like this. First, you notice that panicky, fast, overwhelmed, “oh my gosh, there's not enough time” feeling. And, momentarily, you let off the gas and you put on the brakes. You take a deep breath. You remind yourself what actually matters here. At the end of my life, what matters most?

Given that, what's the most important thing that I need to tend to at this moment? Indeed, this amount of time that I have does not feel ideal, but remember “slow is fast” and it's going to be okay. So overwhelm's antidote is perspective plus patience.

Now let's talk about getting out the door. Do you have frantic, snippy, irritable exits from your house? Leaving for work, for school, for vacation, for the gym? Does it feel like a circus herding cats when you're leaving with other people?

Bring in persistence and playfulness. Playfulness lightens the mood and helps you stop taking things so seriously. And persistence helps keep you going despite inevitable setbacks. Let me just emphasize that again. Setbacks are inevitable. They're not a sign of personal failure. It's just a part of life.

So it looks like this. You notice as you're getting out the door that the stress level is ratcheting. Maybe you notice the authoritarian tone you have, “I said, grab your lunchbox. Why aren't we in the car already? Phone, wallet, keys. Don't talk to me. I just forgot what I came back in for.”

You pause just a second and you realize, “Okay, the pressure cooker is on.” You know you need to lighten the mood, and you also need to keep moving ahead, so you look for a way to be silly. You make a joke about yourself. “OMG, y'all, the drill sergeant mama is in the house. Don't slow down or you're going to see steam come out of her ears.”

You see the absurdity and the chaos. You imagine that the morning is the data the writers for *Saturday Night Live* are going to use for their next skit. You make room for some inside jokes and for some laughing, and you persist.

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You persist by not making the hiccups mean that you're doomed. You hit snags; you keep going. Your first attempt at being playful resulted in, "Mom, now is not the time." But you don't expect it to be smooth sailing, so you just roll with it. Persistence is, "I am too scrappy to be overly bothered by the snags. Yes, it is a shit show some days, but we keep it light and we keep on going."

When you have stress leaving the house, draw on playfulness and persistence.

Now let's talk about taking the first steps towards a big goal, towards something that really, really matters to you, but feels really risky or bold or uncertain. What is that thing for you? Whatever it is, courage and confidence are your best allies.

Big goals can sit on the shelf and they can get dusty. Why? Well, to go for something that you really want often means you're going to be facing fear. You're going to be starting off without knowing "the how", acting, even if you're not 100% sure it's going to work, and making and executing a bunch of decisions without knowing which ones are best. This bar factor makes it easier to stick to the known path.

Courage is a strength and willingness to act when it would be much easier not to act. It's taking a risk without being paralyzed. Courage is not to be mistaken for impulsivity or drunken bravado, but it's a quality that propels us to move, to start, to keep going, to stand up for; to go for something that we really care about when we don't know if it's going to work.

Confidence is knowing that you can handle whatever comes. Because when you know at your core that you are good, worthy, capable, and resourceful, you're going to be willing to learn in public, make mistakes, and trust that in the aftermath, you're going to have your own back.

So instead of letting a big goal die in the vine, meet it with courage plus confidence, together. This will look different for different people. But keep this in mind: Courage and confidence are not reserved just for the special people with special genes who came out of the womb cosmically graced.

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Confidence and courage, like all the qualities that I've mentioned, they're not just for the lucky few.

But you might not feel like they are easy to channel. You might not feel like they're available to you. And I get that. You might also think that you have to try really, really, really hard and work every day to build up these qualities.

But here's the truth: These qualities are already inside of you, just waiting for you to find them. They are usually hidden by layers of limiting beliefs and oppressive ideologies that we have absorbed from socialization and inherited from culture. And the work is learning how to uncover them.

Now let's talk about people-pleasing and setting boundaries. What qualities do you think you could combine to have a synergistic effect to help with people-pleasing and setting boundaries? Now, what often comes to mind is courage. And courage, indeed, it's useful. But actually, what I find to be some of the most effective things, are combining clarity and calm.

They're a dynamic duo when it comes to people-pleasing and setting boundaries, and here's why. People-pleasing can happen so fast. You say yes before you even realize it. Somebody asks you something and you are nodding and agreeing and accommodating, and you didn't even realize it.

Anxiety and urgency and scarcity and worry can be so subtle and can underpin people-pleasing at our own expense. And when we do it, we don't realize it until hindsight; we see we weren't prioritizing us. We were defaulting to accommodating others. And there are so many reasons why people-pleasing makes sense, particularly if you're socialized as a woman; but also for men.

There's a great reason why pleasing others, making sure other people are okay even though you're not tending to your own needs, why that can promote a sense of safety, security, etc.

And in a similar line, there are great reasons why it can be difficult to set boundaries. Setting boundaries is asserting a line in the sand where there was not one before. And there is not one before, oftentimes, because the

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values of others were running the show in a way that we had not yet examined.

So to change people-pleasing, and to have more ease with boundaries, you need calm plus clarity. Calm allows you to pause, deliberately create mental space, and reduce this reactive tendency to respond without thinking. Clarity helps you see things objectively.

When you combine the two, you have a willingness to slow down and get grounded and centered. Which helps you more carefully assess, “Is what I’m about to do or say really what I want to do? Or is it perhaps coming from a part of me that’s scared to say no? Scared of disappointing people? Not wanting to make anyone upset?”

Only when you slow down, can you see this. It’s like trying to spot a certain flower on the side of the road. You can see it pretty easily when you know what it looks like and you’re walking. But if you are driving down the road 60 mph and you’re scanning out the window, it’s just harder to see. So people-pleasing and setting boundaries require you to draw on clarity and calm.

Now, let’s talk about procrastination. Imagine using curiosity and creativity every time you are procrastinating. So picture this: You have that thing you want to do, that you need to do, but you feel frozen. You are overwhelmed. You don’t know where to start. You do nothing. You take forever to start. You have finished the 10 Sudoku’s. Or you’ve done something, but you haven’t actually done the thing.

Curiosity stops avoidance by asking productive questions, which shifts you into a totally different mindset. Creativity brings in an innovative approach to problem solving. And when you combine the two of them, it looks like this: “Oh, I am procrastinating. How come I’m procrastinating? Why am I stalling? What is my biggest worry? What is hard about starting? What’s in the way from getting moving right now?”

“Okay, that’s good to know. All right. Now, knowing me, what are a few different ways that I might approach this if I wasn’t worried about what

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anyone thought? What are some outside-the-box ways that I might actually solve this and get going?" See how procrastination can loosen its grip when you bring in curiosity and creativity?

All right, the last thing I want to mention is self-doubt, perfectionism, and second-guessing. Such a painful but common trio in high achievers. Self-doubt, perfectionism, and second-guessing improves when you meet it with curiosity blended with compassion.

Self-doubt softens when you explore, without berating yourself. Then compassion brings in kindness and validation, to normalize any struggle. Together it looks like, unsure what to do, questioning your ability to do it, fixating on making all the minutiae just right.

You pause and you go, "Whoa, I am doing that thing again. This feels like a straight-jacket. Okay. I know what this is, second-guessing and perfectionism. Okay. Hello. I see you. Here we are again. Okay. Wide open curiosity. What is really going on here? Acting with compassion on purpose? Oh my goodness, yes. This is so understandable."

And then you just wait. When you meet yourself, when you are swirling in just a hellish torture of self-doubt, second-guessing ... all driven by some perfectionism ... and you meet yourself with just a really kind, loving question, "What's going on?" And then you're really compassionate with recognizing that what's going on makes sense, "Other people would feel this way too," you will notice ... perhaps not a 100% disappearance of the self-doubt and second-guessing ... but you will notice a dramatic reduction.

Now imagine all the other different, synergistic combinations that you could have. Courage plus playfulness to try something new, like public speaking or a new sport. Put together compassion and patience to unlearn a habit, like overeating or over-scrolling. Pair presence and confidence to initiate a difficult conversation, and then be able to really listen and respond honestly.

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Put belonging and creativity together, and then, when it comes to working on a team project, you will blend a sense of safety with connection, where new ideas can flourish.

Now, these are just examples. This is no chemistry equation, right? There's not a particular combination that is the one way that you should do it. Only you will find which different qualities you can layer that works best for you.

But let's recap. Overwhelm responds really well to perspective plus patience. For leaving-the-house drama, try playfulness and perspective. For going for big goals, tap into courage and confidence. For people-pleasing and setting boundaries, use calm and clarity. For procrastination, put together curiosity with creativity. And then, for self-doubt, second-guessing and perfectionism, curiosity and compassion will never do you wrong.

Now, remember these qualities: calm, clarity, curiosity, playfulness, compassion, patience, confidence, presence, courage, creativity, belonging, connectedness, perspective, persistence. And know that when you combine them, they can have an amplified effect.

So let's talk about a few important things. When it comes to these qualities, you just need a critical mass of each one. You do not need to feel fully confident, fully calm, fully courageous, 100% patient to do anything beneficial. You just need a whiff of these. You also don't need to despair, if there's a certain quality that's harder for you to access than others. That is just normal.

So how can we implement all this in real life this week? Here's what you're going to do. I want you to pick a habit; pick a habit, any habit. Think of the positive qualities that you are already naturally very good at. And then I want you to think about, what if you use these qualities for making a change with that habit?

Once you have picked a habit, plus some positive qualities, this is what I want you to do: There are four questions. Answer these questions.

#1: What would be different with *blank* habit if I used *blank* quality?

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#2: What other quality can I combine with this for a synergistic effect?

#3: What would I do differently if I invoked these on purpose? AKA what would a camera see me doing that would be different, if I brought in these qualities on purpose?

#4: What specifically will help me remember and do this on purpose? We always need to have a built-in way to remember because life is life. Things get crazy and we forget.

So, here are the questions again. First, pick a habit, any habit. Think of the positive qualities you're already naturally very good at that you could just naturally draw on. And then, what if you use these qualities for making a change? How does that land with you? If it lands good, awesome, you've got your quality in mind.

And then you answer these four questions. If it doesn't land well, just think about it a little bit more. If ultimately you find yourself overthinking, here's what you do: Just pick two or more of the qualities that I've mentioned and use those as an experiment.

So, here are your four questions: What would be different with *blank* habit if I used *blank* quality? What other quality can I combine with it, is the second question. Number three, what would I do differently if I invoked these on purpose for this habit? Number four, what specifically will help me remember and do this on purpose?

That's your work for the week. Go experiment. Then, if you're not already on the email list, join the email list and let me know what worked and what you discovered. I want to learn from you. I'm also on Facebook. And one of these days I'll be more active on Facebook and Instagram and all the places, but for now, the best place to find me is the email list.

I'm so glad I got to spend this time with you. Thank you for listening. Part of my mission is to leave this place better than I found it. And, if through this podcast I can offer something that's helpful for you on your journey, that helps me fulfill my purpose.

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If this episode landed well with you and you found it practical or inspiring, can you do me a huge favor? Can you leave the podcast a rating and most importantly, a short review? I know it is easy to skip doing this, because sometimes I'm a champ at not doing ratings and reviews, so I totally get it.

But I'm going to be your nudge. Before the next show in your rotation starts playing, or before you move to your next new task, pretty please scroll down to the "leave a rating" part of the page, add the stars, and then write a phrase or a sentence or a paragraph as a review.

And for those of you who recently wrote reviews, thank you so, so much. Your time is tremendously helpful and actually has an impact that is probably beyond what you realize. So thank you. I really appreciate it.

Until next week, everyone, I will see you soon.

Are you on the Habits on Purpose email list yet? I send my community emails with practical information, habit change tips, and announcements about workshops, lectures, and in-person events that I'm going to be attending.

I share things that I don't share here on the podcast and I let you in on what I'm studying, what I'm learning, and what I'm going through in my life. When you're on the list, you can always press "Reply" and ask me a question. You'll hear back from me; not from my team, not from AI. You'll hear back from me.

So to connect in your inbox, go to HabitsOnPurpose.com and join the email list. You can also find me on Instagram and Facebook. And get ready for it, eventually ... gasp ... you will find me on TikTok, once I actually open an account.

So take care, and I look forward to connecting.

Thanks for listening to *Habits On Purpose*. If you want more information on Kristi Angevine or the resources from the podcast, visit HabitsOnPurpose.com. Tune in next week for another episode.